

171344Z FEB 08
FM AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5174
INFO AMEMBASSY KABUL
AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
AMCONSUL KARACHI
AMCONSUL LAHORE
AMCONSUL PESHAWAR
CIA WASHDC
USCENTCOM INTEL CEN MACDILL AFB FL
CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL

UNCLAS ISLAMABAD 000698

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PK](#)
SUBJECT: PAKISTAN'S ELECTION EVE

REF: ISLAMABAD 692

¶11. (SBU) Summary: On the eve of Pakistan's general elections, local media reported approximately five incidents of bombings and/or gun fire at polling stations (out of 65,000) in various towns across the country. Codel Jackson-Lee arrived in Islamabad, visiting the headquarters of the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) in remembrance of late leader Benazir Bhutto. 19,000 domestic observers received credentials from the Election Commission. U.S. Mission observer teams arrived in nearly 30 districts across Pakistan for all-day election observation tomorrow. End summary.

Violence

¶12. (U) Local media reported flashes of violence in approximately five towns across Pakistan. Two polling stations in Awaran, Balochistan, were destroyed by bombings. Also in Balochistan, an unidentified gunman shot and killed a Quetta police sub-inspector. A policeman in Thatta, Sindh (east of Karachi), opened fire at a polling station, shouting "Long live Bhutto," killing one polling official and injuring five others.

Irregularities

¶13. (U) A truck containing ballots and election materials was reportedly hijacked in Rawalpindi. Pakistan's Rangers recovered 1000 ballot papers from the ruling Pakistan Muslim League (PML-Q) candidate Mumtaz Chandio in Dadu, Sindh.

Codels

¶14. (U) Representative Sheila Jackson-Lee laid a memorial wreath to slain opposition leader Benazir Bhutto at Pakistan People's Party (PPP) headquarters in Islamabad. Jackson-Lee met privately with PPP co-Chair Asif Zardari as well as officials from USG-funded IFES. She also conducted a joint press conference with Election Commission Secretary Kunwar Dilshad. Her message for free, fair, transparent

SIPDIS
and safe elections was well received. Jackson-Lee was emphatic in publicly encouraging all Pakistanis to exercise their right to vote. She was equally emphatic in imploring the Election Commission to ensure that the GOP took all necessary steps to guarantee the safety of the voters. The press conference was widely covered by international media.

¶15. (U) Senators Biden, Kerry and Hagel expected to arrive in Lahore late February 17.

Observer Missions

¶16. (SBU) According to an EC Observer Mission contact, Pakistani NGO

Center for Media and Democracy (CMD) has recruited 23 international observers (mostly AmCits) to observe the general elections. This organization is reportedly being funded by the pro-Musharraf business community. The EC contact, after meeting with this group, warned us that "it did not appear that the CMD had a methodology." CMD expected to release a statement of its findings on February 19. More information can be found about this organization at: www.cmdpakistan.org.

¶17. (U) USG-funded The Asia Foundation (TAF) reported February 16 that 19,000 domestic observers received their credentials from the Election Commission. Only two districts in Balochistan will not be accredited, and they are still waiting for 500 in Punjab. 100% have been accredited in Sindh and NWFP.

¶18. (U) The ECP also reported that all but three districts' polling station information is now posted on the website.

¶19. (U) A local contact informed Consulate Peshawar that a jirga in Jamrud, of the tribal elders of Kokikhel (largest tribe in Khyber), Khyber Agency has made a decision with the concurrence of all elders in the agency, that no women will be allowed to vote tomorrow.

¶10. (SBU) All 21 U.S. Mission Election Observer teams have confirmed their arrivals in various locations throughout Pakistan. Geographical coverage will range from Islamabad in the North, Lahore in the East, Bahawalpur in the South, and Quetta in the West.

PATTERSON